CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES ONLINE IN INDEPENDENT STUDY

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Abstract. This article explores the challenges and strategies of distance language learning in the context of independent study, focusing on teaching foreign language online. The rapid development of digital technologies has created new opportunities for learners to access educational materials and practice language skills autonomously. However, independent online learning also brings difficulties such as reduced motivation, lack of feedback, limited speaking practice, and the challenge of maintaining discipline. Drawing on recent studies in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), learner autonomy, and online pedagogy, this research highlights effective strategies for overcoming these issues. Recommendations include integrating interactive platforms, providing structured self-study tasks, encouraging peer collaboration, and using adaptive assessment tools. The study concludes that successful independent online learning requires a balanced approach that combines technological resources with pedagogical support and learner self-regulation.

Keywords: distance learning, independent study, online foreign language teaching, learner autonomy, CALL.

Introduction. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the global transition to distance education, making online learning the primary mode of instruction in many contexts. While online platforms provide flexibility, accessibility, and a wealth of resources, the shift to independent study has placed additional responsibilities on learners. In foreign language learning, particularly foreign language, the challenge is compounded by the need for constant interaction, feedback, and practice of speaking and listening skills.

Independent online learning requires learners to demonstrate autonomy, motivation, and effective time management. For educators, the question is not only how to design engaging online materials, but also how to foster learner self-regulation and provide support without physical presence. This article examines the challenges associated with online foreign language learning in independent study and suggests strategies to overcome them.

Literature Review. Research on distance education emphasizes learner autonomy as a key factor for success (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Autonomous learners are able to set goals, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes. However, in practice, not all students possess the skills required for effective self-directed learning.

Recent studies on online learning (Hodges et al., 2020) indicate that the sudden shift to distance education during the pandemic revealed gaps in student preparedness for independent study. Issues such as screen fatigue, lack of real-time feedback, and unequal access to technology continue to challenge both learners and educators.

Methodology. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on analysis of existing research, online teaching practices, and case studies from language classrooms. The focus is placed on identifying key difficulties encountered by students in independent online study and the strategies educators have used to mitigate them. Data includes published studies in CALL, online pedagogy, and language teaching methodology.

Results and Discussion. The analysis of distance language learning in the context of independent study reveals a complex combination of opportunities and challenges that directly influence the effectiveness of foreign language online teaching. One of the central issues is reduced motivation: in the absence of live classroom interaction, many learners struggle to maintain consistent interest and commitment to their studies. This problem is closely connected with another difficulty, the lack of timely feedback, particularly in the development of oral skills. Independent online environments often provide abundant reading and writing tasks, yet they rarely guarantee sufficient opportunities for speaking and listening practice, which are essential for communicative competence. At the same time, the burden of self-regulation and discipline becomes heavier in the online mode, where the responsibility for following a learning plan rests almost entirely on the learner. Procrastination, irregular study habits, and ineffective time management are among the most common barriers encountered in this context.

Technological limitations further complicate the process. Unequal internet access, technical malfunctions, and insufficient digital literacy prevent students from fully benefiting from the available resources. Despite these obstacles, independent online learning also opens new possibilities. Learners gain access to interactive platforms that enable vocabulary expansion, grammar practice, and immediate automated assessment. Virtual speaking clubs, discussion forums, and peer collaboration initiatives help mitigate the sense of isolation and create conditions for social learning. Moreover, structured self-study programs designed by teachers provide an essential framework that prevents learners from being overwhelmed by excessive freedom and lack of direction. Adaptive assessment tools, supported by artificial intelligence, allow students to monitor their progress in real time and receive feedback that encourages further development.

Overall, the results suggest that the effectiveness of independent online language learning depends on a delicate balance between learner autonomy and external pedagogical support. When students are left entirely on their own, motivation and discipline quickly decline, while an excess of external control undermines the very concept of independent study. Therefore, the optimal approach is to integrate technological resources with carefully designed pedagogical guidance, ensuring that learners remain engaged, responsible, and

motivated, while still benefiting from the flexibility and accessibility that online education provides.

Pedagogical Implications. Teachers must balance autonomy with guidance, ensuring that students are not overwhelmed by the responsibility of independent learning. Training students in self-regulation and digital literacy is as important as teaching language skills themselves.

Conclusion. Independent online language learning offers both opportunities and challenges. While students gain flexibility and access to vast resources, they also face motivational, disciplinary, and interactive difficulties. Effective strategies include structured learning plans, interactive platforms, peer collaboration, and adaptive feedback. Ultimately, successful online learning requires a synergy between learner autonomy and teacher support. Future research should explore the long-term impact of independent online study on language proficiency and investigate how artificial intelligence tools can personalize feedback and foster oral communication in digital environments.

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